WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An apparatus for identifying a requested level of service for a transaction, comprising:

computer readable storage media; and

computer readable program code stored in said storage media, comprising:

a) program code for selecting said requested level of service for said transaction; and

b) program code for assigning said requested level of service to said transaction.

2. An apparatus, as in claim 1, wherein said transaction is a packetized signal comprising at least a data packet, and wherein a service tag is associated with said data packet by said program code for assigning said requested level of service, said service tag including said requested level of service.

3. An apparatus, as in claim 1, further comprising:

a) program code for selecting a backup level of service; and

b) program code for assigning said backup level of service to said transaction.

4. An apparatus, as in claim 1, wherein said requested level of service is a predefined service category.

5. An apparatus, as in claim 1, wherein said requested level of service is based on a user identification.

6. An apparatus, as in claim 1, wherein said requested level of service is

based on a transaction type.

7. An apparatus, as in claim 1, further comprising a user interface for selecting said requested level of service.

8. An apparatus, as in claim 1, wherein said requested level of service includes a plurality of parameters.

9. A method for requesting a level of service for a transaction on a network, comprising:
selecting said requested level of service for said transaction; and
assigning said requested level of service to said transaction.

10. A method, as in claim 9, wherein selecting said requested level of service comprises receiving a user-defined level of service.

11. A method, as in claim 9, wherein selecting said requested level of service comprises assessing a number of characteristics of said transaction.

12. A method, as in claim 9, wherein a network device best provides said requested level of service.

13. A method, as in claim 9, wherein said requested level of service is automatically assigned to said transaction.

14. An apparatus for routing a transaction over a network based on a requested level of service associated with said transaction, comprising:
a number of computer readable storage media; and
computer readable program code stored in said number of storage

media, comprising:

a) program code for selecting said requested level of service for said transaction;

b) program code for assigning a service tag to said transaction, said service tag including said requested level of service;

c) program code for reading said requested level of service from said service tag; and

d) program code for directing said transaction over said network based on said requested level of service read from said service tag.

15. An apparatus, as in claim 14, wherein said transaction is directed over said network to a device best providing said requested level of service.

16. An apparatus, as in claim 14, wherein said service tag is assigned by program code at more than one point on said network.

17. An apparatus, as in claim 14, wherein said service tag is read by program code at more than one point on said network.

18. An apparatus, as in claim 14, further comprising program code for changing said requested level of service included on said service tag.

19. An apparatus for requesting a level of service for a transaction on a network, comprising:

means for selecting said requested level of service; and

means for assigning said requested level of service to said transaction, wherein said transaction is directed to a network device based on said requested level of service.

20. An apparatus, as in claim 19, further comprising means for reading said requested level of service assigned to said transaction.